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RECENT THEOLOGICAL LITERATURE.

DIE GRUNDFRAGE DER RELIGION: Versuch einer auf den realen Wissenschaften ruhenden Gotteslehre. Von DR. JULIUS BAUMANN, ordentlichem Professor der Philosophie an der Universität Göttingen. Stuttgart: Frommann, 1895. Pp. 72, 8vo. M 1.20.

IN a book called *The Fundamental Facts for a Scientific Theory of the World and of Life* the author declared repeatedly that the results of the natural sciences doubtless still leave room for a scientific conception of God. In the present book he attempts such a doctrine.

A preface of fifteen lines gives the author's explanation for his own previous inability to formulate this doctrine, namely, his habit of allowing the idealizing activity of the human mind to preponderate in the conception of God. On the contrary we must proceed from the real and return to the real, and only bring idealizing into play as a means of making the real more exact according to its own suggestions. The author speaks first of religion in general, discusses the question whether religion is subjective or objective, and thereupon places before us the Christian religion as it is found in Harnack's *History of Doctrine*, closing with the presentation of a doctrine of God which rests upon the real or exact sciences and therefore is objective.

The treatment of religion in general emphasizes the fact that it is a part of the natural furniture of normal human spiritual life, and that even the lowest religion has a drift toward that which is higher.

The discussion of the subjectivity or objectivity of religion is extremely unsatisfactory. On pages 11-16 we learn, by means of unceasing confusion of the notions of surety, conviction, and proof, that the internal certainty of religion is nothing at all; then objectivity is disposed of, on pages 17-22, by giving a short summary of the claims of Jesus and of the Old Testament prophets, and there is no due conclusion of any kind.

It is not clear why the author in the third chapter, pp. 23-41, takes up in particular Harnack's *History of Doctrine*. He could have disposed of the claims of subjectivity in religion in a much shorter way, and in a way more fitting for so brief a treatment, than by the discussion

of a single person. In descending into the details in this manner and even going into a characterization of Harnack's personality, the author loses altogether the objectivity of his philosophical presentation of the question. This third chapter concludes as the second did: Thus far all is subjective and uncertain.

The fourth chapter gives us, then, the author's own "objective doctrine of God" on pages 41-72. Here is the main part of the whole book: a scientific doctrine of God which at one stroke is to give us something that all theology has thus far sought in vain. We take this chapter up with vivid interest to see what can possibly be in it. Remember that from this point onwards everything is to be strictly "scientific," there is to be none of the sentimental, fanciful style that may, for example, be found in the works of a novel writer. On page 43 we reach the wonderful sentence: "Points of similarity and mutual connection between things in their activity press upon us the thought of a single cause from which they probably proceed." The overpowering scientific novelty, necessity, and convincingness of this surprising sentence are of course enough to persuade anybody to read further and find out whether there is more of this wisdom. We can assure the curious that the next fourteen pages give nothing but the frivolous process of constructing heaven and earth and a few other things on the dry sand crust of that sentence.

It is worthy of note that the author more than once in the coolest and most determined way recommends both suicide and murder.

Upon page 57 it at last occurs to the author that in order to be scientific he should ask himself whether his doctrine be sound or not, and whether it really be settled upon a firmer basis than any preceding doctrine of God. It is a most happy thought that he inquire whether his point of departure be worth anything or not for the purposes of his argument. What is the result? Bitter disappointment for the reader who has thus far accepted all his statements as worthy of belief. It turns out that the whole system has not a shadow of a scientific foundation. When the author comes to himself he confesses that the world can be logically conceived of in other ways than his way, and that he at best can only claim "probability" for his theory.

Reality? Science? Religion? The author presents out of his own resources neither reality nor science nor religion.

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